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CIA chief says: 'We are trying to be more open'

By M.L. Stein

The Central Intelligence Agency is trying to be "more open with the media and the public" by passing out unclassified material and being responsive to inquiries, Director Stansfield Turner said in Los Angeles (March 30).

"We're no longer stuck in the 'no comment' grove," Admiral Turner added, "although we sometimes have to say 'no comment.'"

Speaking at a breakfast meeting of the Greater Los Angeles Press Club, the CIA chief said, "We are doing a vital job and we want you (the press) to know as much about it as we can. But sometimes our need for some level of secrecy is in contradiction to the media's job of keeping the public informed."

Turner noted that, like the press, the CIA also has a responsibility to protect its sources. The organization, he continued, must also protect government policy makers.

"When we have an 'exclusive' we try to hold on to it as long as we can," Turner admitted. "But still, we can understand each other's purposes and motives so we can keep you informed while protecting our sources and our policy makers."

At the same time, however, Turner was sharply critical of newspaper accounts that, in his opinion, dredge up "well worn" CIA stories and present them as news.

"We read about some charges against the CIA and then in the last paragraph we find that it happened in 1952," he explained. The director also took a swipe at government employees who leak information to the press.

"A large percentage of the leakers have motives which are not altruistic," he said. "To publish their information may not be in the public interest."

The director said he favored prosecution of persons who release classified information.

Turner expressed further distaste for ex-CIA agents who have written critical books exposing the inner workings of the agency.

In a question and answer session, Turner claimed that the publication of the Pentagon Papers weakened the CIA and "led to more disclosures by irresponsible people." Turner said he favored tightening the rules for releasing classified information, noting that the United States exchanges some secrets with friendly countries.

"These nations will not want to share their secrets if they are to appear in the US press," Turner pointed out.

However, the director said the CIA has made changes in its handling of classified and unclassified material so that standards are more specific and authority to classify more limited.

To another questioner, Turner conceded that the CIA had miscalculated events in Iran but added, "the press in academia didn't do much better."

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The Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) told a Harrisburg, Pa., audience March 10 that the Freedom of Information Act is "eroding" the ability of the agency to recruit and protect agents overseas.

Frank C. Carlucci, in an address at a meeting of the Keystone State Chapter of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, said the "Principal impediment" facing CIA agents is the ability to "protect their sources and methods", adding that this ability has "eroded" under FOI.

"Everyone is claiming a legitimate need to know, but it's axiomatic, the more people who know, the more leaks are likely.

"It's not the workload" of handling 88 requests a week at a cost of \$3 a year, "but the 'chilling effect' this has on our work overseas. We seem to have laws that help our enemies. No one is going to confide in you if his information or his name is going to come out in the newspaper or congressional hearing," Carlucci said.